

Student Handbook

Illinois History Expo

Your Guide to Becoming a History Detective

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Part One: Research

After the very important decision of selecting your topic, the research phase of Illinois History Expo begins! Students will become historians looking for the best information to tell their stories. Like a detective, you will be expected to investigate in the right locations (libraries, historic sites, talking to an expert) to find the clues necessary to support your thesis statement. The best part is **you** get to **choose** an Illinois-related history topic that **you** find **interesting** and want to research.

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Presentation

Now that you have found sources and compiled the relevant information to tell the history as well as to support your thesis statement, you must now make a presentation or write a paper. Some topics are more suited for certain presentations. For example, documentaries and exhibits rely on images to help tell the story. If your topic has few available images, you may decide to compose a research paper. Each Illinois History Expo category has recommended ways to present information. However, it is **YOUR project**, so let the creative juices flow, **work hard, and you will proud of your effort!**

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Part One

Research (Noun. Scholarly investigation or research)

Researching History for Illinois History Expo

Topic Selection Comes First.

Choosing your Illinois History Expo Topic is Very Important!

- ✓ Is your topic one that interests you?
- ✓ Can you locate good source material to support your thesis statement?
- ✓ Is the topic important and interesting to others?
- ✓ If you are planning to also enter your Illinois History Expo project in National History Day competition, does your topic strongly relate to this year's theme?
- ✓ Illinois History Expo students who choose not to participate in NHD may pick any topic on any theme. The only requirement is that your topic must have a connection to Illinois history

Focusing and Narrowing Your Topic into a Thesis Statement

One of the best ways to pick a topic is to think about what you find interesting in your own life that can relate to history. Think about how your interests may have an historic past that is interesting to you as well as others.

It may be family history or a local history story that you find intriguing. A period of history in your textbook that you found exciting and important could be a starting point for topic selection. Maybe a conversation with an older family member or neighbor might help stimulate an interest in a family or local history topic.

For example, if the NHD topic theme was the "Individual in History" and you were interested in women's history, you may come across the reformer Jane Addams story. The Jane Addams biography still needs to be focused on a more narrow aspect of her long and broad career. Because you are in junior high school, you may have an interest in history that impacted kids your own age. This could sharpen your focus on the social reformer's work with children.

To sharpen the focus even tighter you might wish to examine her work on behalf of dependent children in Illinois and the effort to move children out of institutional housing and into foster homes. Addams impact on getting kids out of orphanages and into homes is an important part of state and national history.

This is a way to take a broad topic and narrow the focus and come up with a thesis statement.

Theme-----	Individual in History
General Interest.....	Women in Illinois History
Broad Topic.....	Jane Addams
Narrow Topic.....	Addams and orphaned children
Thesis Statement.....	Addams helped pass laws to move children out of large orphanages and into foster homes

Figure 1: topic narrowing

Locating Source Material and Organizing Information

Research Strategy

Historians break the research process into two parts:

- 1. Finding sources of information**

Starting your search for information using textbooks, the Internet, encyclopedias, and books in the school library are good places to start looking and learning about your topic. The next step is to visit a city library or a college library. Student researchers can also search special collections at a library that deals with your subject or visit a historic site. Historical societies and national or state archives are good places to look for details. Interviewing an expert on the topic is another good source of information.

2. Starting your bibliography and notes

Keeping a record of the sources you will use to support your thesis is collectively called a bibliography. This list of sources will show the depth of your research efforts and exploration into your subject. One set of cards should be used to record the information on the source. This will be used later to compile your annotated bibliography. Another set of cards will be used to write the information you find in the source. These are called note cards. It doesn't make any sense to read information and not record it for later use when putting your presentation together. Writing on your note cards the most important facts and quotes will help reassemble the pieces of the story at a later date.

Index cards can be purchased at an office supply or "big box" store. Look to use the larger sized cards (5 inches x 8 inches) that have lines. Different color note cards may be used to help organize your information.

Sample Note Cards

Check out these index cards for a bibliography entry and research notes about social reformer Jane Addams, founder of Chicago's Hull House.

Bibliography	Secondary Source	Book
Howard, Robert P.	Illinois: A History of the Prairie State. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972	
This book has good information about Jane Addams and her efforts to work with Chicago city leaders and the Illinois legislature to provide foster care for orphans as an alternative to living in large institutional orphanages. It also contains a whole chapter devoted to Jane Addams life and Hull House in general. There is a good picture of Addams.		
Important Pages: 399-402		

Figure 2: Bibliography Card

Now that you have finished writing down the general information that can be used for supporting your thesis, it is time to take more in-depth notes for your history fair research. On a new note card, record a brief description of the information, the source, and page number. When you start to fill out the note card with the author's research, make sure to **paraphrase** (short summary of the authors ideas in your own words) the

information to avoid **plagiarism**. If you are directly transcribing the text you **MUST** make note that this is an exact quote taken from the book and make sure you cite the quote in your end notes.

Jane Addams early life in Cedarville & move to Chicago

Howard, P. 399

Jane Addams was born in 1860 in Cedarville, Illinois, a small community near Rockford. Her father was well to do. Jane had five brothers and sisters; her mother died when Jane was two. Jane was extremely close to her father who remarried and now Jane had two step-brothers. Her father encouraged Jane to pursue an education and she attended the Rockford Seminary for young ladies where she excelled in her studies.

“Jane wished to continue her education in the Medical field. This was however not acceptable to her parents who felt she had received enough education and it was time to get married and start a family” (Howard)

“My life in **Cederville** set the foundation on which I build the rest of my career” (Jane Addams)

Figure 3: Note Card

Research Sources

The most important elements to building a comprehensive research project are the sources that historians use to analyze the story. It is important to gather and study a wide variety of sources. A good historian is like a detective who examines clues to solve a case; historians gather and sources for information to understand their topic.

There are two types of sources: **Primary** and **Secondary**.

Primary Sources

Primary sources are accounts taken at the time of the event or accounts taken after the event but by a person who was a witness to the historic event. These sources are related to the history by time or participation because they:

- Were written or produced during the time period of your topic
- Are an eyewitness account to the event you are researching
- Are later recollections of witnesses to the event or time period you are studying

Examples of primary sources:

- Diaries
- Manuscripts
- Interviews with participants
- Autobiographies
- Newspapers written at the time of the event
- Photographs
- Letters & postcards
- Historic objects
- Music
- Government records

Secondary Sources

Secondary sources are usually published in a book or article by the writer who has made a personal interpretation based on the use of primary sources. The author of a secondary source is not an eyewitness or a participant to the historic event but rather has learned about the event from the accounts of others. Most books in libraries are secondary sources and are valuable for providing background on your topic. Footnotes and bibliographies in secondary sources can lead you to strong primary sources.

Remember that history can be subjective, and differing interpretations of an important event can easily be found in a variety of secondary accounts. You must rely on your individual research to come up with your personal analysis of the event.

Examples of Secondary Sources:

- Biographies
- Books about the topic
- Encyclopedias
- Articles about the topic
- History textbooks
- Movies & Media documentaries
- Interviews with scholars who were not present at the event
- Teachers

Locating Sources

Start your search in your school library and then visit the local city library. An encyclopedia can be a good place to get background information for your history fair topic. The Internet is also a good place to look for sources and can lead you to some credible sources and some questionable ones, too, so be careful. Don't be afraid to ask a professional librarian for help in locating source material. A good project will have a variety of sources from a variety of places.

The first few books you locate on your topic can lead you to additional sources. Look at the footnotes or bibliography and notes section for listings of both primary and secondary sources. Write these sources down in a notebook so you can search for them later. Using interlibrary loans will increase your access to books unavailable at the local library. If being a good historian means working like a detective, then you must find where the clues may be hidden. Here are some places to look for primary sources:

City, County or College Libraries

These libraries will have more good primary sources for you to examine. You can usually find newspapers on microfilm to research. Many libraries will have a vertical file available on your topic. A special collections section will be a great help if you are working on a local history topic. You may not be permitted to check out books, so bring some cash to pay for photocopying.

Historical Societies and Historic Sites

Other places to look for primary source material are at a county historical society, or to visit an historic site associated with your topic or time period. This is especially true if you are studying state and local history. Here you may find letters, diaries, photographs and artifacts. Call ahead for hours of operation and to find out if there are materials of use to you and if there are any special rules for using the collections. You may also learn of a local expert or participant that you could interview for your project.

Interviews

If you are able to locate a participant to your topic, and he or she is willing, conducting an oral interview is a very insightful way to learn firsthand about the historic event. After contacting the subject and setting a time and place for the interview you should write out questions. Use a tape or video recorder when conducting the interview. If a face-to-face interview is not possible you may do the interview by e-mail, snail mail, or phone.

Using the World Wide Web for Research

The Internet has become an incredibly useful tool for researchers of history as well as other subjects. A good place to look for links to Illinois history is by visiting the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency web site and linking to history fair. Visiting credible web sites is a valuable tool for those who do not have easy access to libraries. The Internet can get you inside the collections of many prestigious institutions to examine primary source documents on your computer screen.

How to take advantage of the Internet

- Use the Internet along with the books you found in the school library to get some general background information on your topic
- Use the Internet to look at on-line catalogs at libraries before you visit. This will save you time.
- Many libraries are now posting primary sources on-line. If you can locate sources that pertain to your topic you should download these for your research. Being able to get access to libraries hundreds or thousands of miles from your home is a wonderful advantage for modern day historians and researcher of all types!

Internet pitfalls to avoid

- Be careful of researching on questionable sites. Web sites hosted by educational institutions, government agencies, and municipal libraries are trustworthy sites. Sites hosted by individuals can be credible. However, the author could have a particular agenda he is interested in promoting and this may cloud his judgment.
- Because only a small amount of information is available on the Internet, it is important to locate and use other sources. This means you must leave your computer and visit libraries!

Summary Statement Form and Bibliography

Title Page

The title page must have your project title, school, student name, and division. It is important to create a good title for your project or paper. The title should clearly introduce your topic as well as offer the reader insight into your point of view on the topic.

Here is a title that could be used to quickly introduce the focus of the subject and topic:

***Jane Addams's Fights for Illinois Children:
The Legislative efforts against Warehousing Parentless Children***

This title offers the reader an idea about the specific type of social reform advocated by Jane Addams and how Progressive Era leaders used the legislative process to pass laws favorable to the causes of children

Summary Statement Form

A summary statement form answering the following questions must be filled out and accompany all projects at the regional and Illinois History Expo. This is not an essay on your project but rather a series of questions describing topic selection, the connection to Illinois history, and process of how you developed the entry. You will not be interviewed by the judges; so this gives them an idea of the reasons you selected the topic and how you developed your entry.

1. Explain the main theme of your entry.
2. Explain why you became interested in researching your subject. What is your favorite part of the project?
3. Explain the stages involved in the creation your entry.
4. How much time did you spend working and researching your entry?
5. What did you learn from your research? Did you find any conflicting information about your topic while you were researching? If so, please explain.
6. Explain the projects relationship to Illinois history.
7. Attach a bibliography of the sources you used. Include any oral history interviews. Also list any libraries, museums or other institutions you may have visited for your project.
8. How does your Illinois History Expo project relate to the National History Day theme?

Bibliography

All projects must include a bibliography with an alphabetized list of sources used in researching the history fair entry. Research papers must have an **Annotated Bibliography** that lists the source and provide a short description of it and how you used the source in your research paper. National History Day entries should separate primary and secondary sources. For guidelines on bibliographies refer to *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* by Kate L. Turabian, or the style guide of the Modern Language Associations of America (MLA)

Part Two

Presentation: (Noun. A creative demonstration of ideas and information)

After completing topic selection, locating sources, writing note cards, and writing a thesis statement and outline, it is time to present your research in one of the following categories.

- ❖ **Research Paper**
- ❖ **Exhibit**
- ❖ **Media Documentary**
- ❖ **Dramatic Performance**

Research papers are an individual entry. Exhibits, media documentaries, and performance can be an individual effort or a group project with up to 5 students. Having a vision of how you see the best path to achieve your goals will help you decide the important decisions of picking a category and deciding to work alone or in a group.

Presenting Your Topic

After making the most important decision of topic selection, it is time to decide if you should work on your project alone or in a group. If you are working on a paper the decision has been made for you. However, exhibits, media, and performances can be a group or individual entry.

Working Alone or in a Group

Think of the following points when deciding how to proceed:

Working alone

You know yourself and how you like to approach assignments. One of the five-dollar words many students learn (the hard way) is procrastination. If this word does not

describe you and how you approach a task, then maybe working solo on a project is the best choice to make. You make the deadlines and you do all the work. Indeed, if you succeed then the feeling of satisfaction is a rewarding one!

Working in a Group

If you like working in groups and collaborating to accomplish goals, maybe a group project would be more enjoyable. A distinct advantage is work sharing and relying on different skills and strengths to realize the goals of a winning project. Members must also learn to compromise and make decisions for the over-all good of the project. There are some important things to consider when forming a team. Ask yourself the following questions:

- What type of people have I enjoyed working with in the past?
- What type of people do I enjoy working with?
- What qualities makes someone a good group member?
- What traits in people do I want to avoid when picking my partners?

Choosing a Category

This is a important consideration because you want to give yourself the chance to create the best project possible. Things to think about:

- What category best fits your interests and strengths or those of all the group members?
- Will you have access to the equipment and materials you need to present your entry?
- Are you going to able to gather the materials needed to the category (For example is you are going to a medial project can you assemble enough visual material to tell the story?).

Now you need to check out examples of other projects and presentations to get ideas for your project.

The History Expo Contest Rules

Now that you have picked a topic, decide on a format. Look over the rules for the contest and also look over the criteria on how to judge projects. Expo rules can be accessed from the web site. www.IllinoisHistory.gov

Research Paper Category

Researching and writing an historical paper for Illinois History Expo is similar to the writing of research papers and books by college professors. Throughout your years in school, you will be expected to write research papers.

Here are the four basic steps to writing a research paper for Illinois History Expo.

1. Selecting your topic
2. Locating sources and collecting relevant information
3. Organizing your notes
4. Presenting the topic in a clear and reasoned paper

There are many available resources that will give useful advice on the writing of research papers. Ask your history teacher or language arts teachers if her or she has any preferences on style and guidelines for you to follow.

What is a footnote?

Footnotes inform the paper reader that some of the information contained in the research paper comes from the work of other writers and are not original thoughts or words of the author. The system of footnoting gives credit for the work of the researchers you used in writing your paper, as well as evidence in support of your ideas. Footnotes normally are used in these situations:

1. **Quoting a Primary Source** – When you take a direct quote from a speech or interview and insert it directly into your paper, you **MUST** footnote the source.
2. **Quoting a Secondary Source**—If you use a direct quote from another book you **MUST** footnote the source.
3. **Paraphrasing a Secondary Source**—Even if you do not use the exact words from a book but are paraphrasing the idea in your own words, you **MUST** still footnote the source.

How many words and how many pages should the paper be?

Illinois History Expo research papers are 1,500 to 2,500 words in length. Papers must be typed, double spaced. Each word or number in the text counts as one word. The word limit does not apply to notes, annotated bibliography, illustration captions, and supplemental appendix materials. This works out to approximately 6 to 10 pages of text. Good luck and happy researching!

Exhibit Category

The purpose of an exhibit is to display information for the viewer in an attractive and easy to understand format. Your exhibit is going to be very similar to the displays you have seen in museums. Striking a balance between well-placed historical information and images is very important; the display must be informative, easy to follow, and visually appealing! Too much text and too few images is not the answer, and indeed, too many pictures without enough text also fail to achieve the right balance. We will examine this in more detail later

Size Requirements

The overall size of your exhibit when displayed for judging must be no larger than 40 inches wide, 30 inches deep, and six feet high. The table height is not figured into the size of the exhibit.

Three-Panel Exhibit

The most common exhibit format displayed at Illinois History Expo is the three-panel display board. This is an effective and uncomplicated way to visually display the historical information you have collected on your topic. Following these design tips will help the judges discern the subject and the supporting information backing your thesis.

- Be sure your title is the main focus of the center panel.
- Also put the thesis or main ideas on the center panel. The judges now have quickly read the main ideas and can read the supporting material on the side panels.
- Side panels can be used to tell the story in a chronological format with the beginning on the top left panel and ending with the conclusion on the bottom of the right panel. This is where you will analyze the importance of your topic.
- Artifacts or other support material may be placed on the table between the side panels

Labeling and Exhibit Design: Orientation, Segmentation, and Explanation

The placement and size of your exhibit labels is very important in directing the viewer's attention to the right place at the right time. In other words, you want the judges to quickly become acquainted with history fair topic (**orientation**) and then move to your thesis and general background information. The size of the title and thesis statement labels should be the biggest on the board.

The next portion of your exhibit to be examined by the viewer hopefully will be the section introducing the first part of the story. The exhibit should be segmented into sections that explain the different parts of the story or **segmentation** of the historical event or person. You may look at the topic this way: first explain the foundation or background and then move to the historic event. The final portion of the display is the conclusion; here you must explain to the viewer how the historic event is significant and how it impacted life then and now. The labels used to separate the segments will be smaller in size than the labels used for the title of the exhibit. The smallest text is used to tell the story and for photograph captions (**explanation**).

Jane Addams: Fighting for Homeless Children in Illinois

Addams advocated in the Illinois Legislature to eliminate the warehousing of homeless children in large institutional homes. She wanted to move them into smaller home-like settings. This started a new era in social services that made the Hull House known world wide.

Title and Thesis Statement

Jane Addams: Early life in Cedarville, Illinois

(Segmentation or the parts)

Jane Addams was born in a small town in northern Illinois

(explanation of story and photo captions)

One way to make sure you titles and captions stand out is to put the text on light color paper and then use a darker color for the background. You can use construction paper, tag board, or mat board. For the text, if you select dark black lettering it will be easier to read. Photographs and other images will stand out if you put them on backgrounds as well.

There can be a fine balance between too much information and too little on an exhibit. If you add too many illustrations or photographs or too much text, the exhibit board can become confusing and hard to follow. It may be enticing to share all the information you have researched on your exhibit board, however, this is not a good idea. Pick only the most important items for the exhibit. Organization and clarity are very important aspects for a successful Illinois History Expo exhibit!

Media Documentary Projects

Media documentaries allow you to make a ten-minute documentary like you may have seen on PBS or the History Channel. Therefore it is good idea to watch quality

documentaries to see for yourself the approach and techniques used by professionals. Here are the most popular formats: Photographic slide presentations, computer-generated slide presentation, and analog or digital video presentations. These are the tips to help you succeed with your production:

- Get an idea, look, around, talk to people, and think about the topic.
- Define the topic and write a thesis statement.
- Research primary sources and secondary sources and look over notes before writing an outline.
- Make a storyboard of the types of images you want to use to explain your topic.
- Collect a large number of images to avoid repetition and to keep the program interesting
- Appropriate music is important addition to your script. Be careful to keep the volume at a level that does not distract from the narration.
- Write your script first and then add images.
- Make sure the script and the images on the screen go together.
- Be sure that the narration is clear and the pace allows the viewer to hear every word clearly.
- Use a tripod whenever possible.
- Preview early and re-edit at least once.

Computer-generated Slide Presentations

Many students are developing slide shows using computer software. This is an excellent way to combine your audio and visuals. Do not use too many slides of just text to tell your story. Images driven by a recorded audio track are much more effective than bullet points or text pages. If you plan to run a slide show on the computer, be sure to bring all the equipment you will need to the history fair.

DVD Presentations

The availability of home video cameras and computer software for digital editing can make producing a documentary much easier for you. To assemble a great looking DVD, follow these helpful tips

- Remember a student must operate the camera and editing equipment.
- Map out your scenes on a storyboard before you head out to shoot tape.
- Incorporate a variety of shots in the production: including live interviews, historic photographs, artistic graphics, and live shots of historic places.
- Keep track in a notebook of the scenes shot and the corresponding number in the tape counter.
- Clear and well-paced narration is a very important aspects to a superior media documentary.
- Preview the documentary early to allow enough time for editing.

Performance Category

The performance category allows you to create a play based on an historic event. It is important to have a dramatic appeal in the presentation. Creativity is important when using this format, and using live actors and props helps to tell a convincing story in a compelling fashion.

- Get an idea, look around, talk to people and think about a topic.
- Define the topic and then write a thesis statement.
- Research primary and secondary sources, and look over notes before writing an outline.
- Research before thinking about the performance aspect.
- When you write your script include references to historical material. You should include information from the best primary sources. This can be accomplished by using direct quotes, or taking excerpts from speeches and reciting them on stage.
- Do not just recite a oral report on a character or event. You must become the figure by portraying him or her. If you are dramatizing an event, you may have to become multiple characters to tell the whole story.
- Props can be helpful, however, remember you only have 5 minutes for set-up and take down. Though props may be helpful to tell the story, it is going to be your research, script, and ability to dramatically tell the story that is important.
- Good costumes help make you convincing, but be sure they are appropriate to your topic. Look at photographs or costume guides if you are unsure about appropriate dress.
- Practice! Practice! Practice!
- Have a member of the local theater group critique the performance.

How Illinois History Fair Projects are Evaluated

Quality of Analysis:

Does your Illinois History Expo project ask and answer a question or questions? Better projects ask and answer more important questions than who, what, and when. It asks why. It answers the question(s) in steps leading to a logical conclusion. It relates the answers to broad items of interest to many people. For example, a project about a business's history will ask: "Were there others like it elsewhere? What happened to them and why? Is there a pattern, or is the project dealing with an isolated event? Do the facts support the conclusion?"

Historical Knowledge

Does your Illinois History Expo project demonstrate understanding of relevant factual information or does it include unnecessary as well as important information? Does your entry effectively use important information at all points in the steps of analysis leading to the conclusion?

Quality of Sources:

Are you using a variety of sources (primary documents, secondary accounts, oral interviews, statistics, and illustrations) in your research? Better projects make use of each of the above. Weaker projects rely heavily on one source. Encyclopedia articles may be used for an overview of the topic but not as a main source for the project. Make sure your Internet sources are sound.

Quality of Presentation:

This realm depends exclusively on the look of your project. Is it neat and orderly, helping the viewer or reader to see and understand the project's thesis statement and the path to reaching the conclusion? If your project draws the viewer's attention, for example, to bad spelling, uneven exhibit labels, inaudible narration, a poorly rehearsed presentation, incomplete footnotes, or sloppy typing, it will damage your chance to receive a superior rating!